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Weekly Situation Report on International Terrorism

[redacted] 3.5(c)

6 January 1976

Secret

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06 JAN 1976

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Argentine Army Wins Victory Over ERP

On 23 December the People's Revolutionary Army attacked the Domingo Viejobueno Arsenal Battalion at Monte Chingolo in Buenos Aires Province and were soundly defeated by the Argentine military. The attack was carried out by approximately 130 individuals, and ERP casualty estimates range between 55 and 100. [redacted] two of Santucho's close relatives plus the chief accountant of the ERP and the director of the ERP military training school were slain in the attack.

3.3(b)(1)

The ERP attack was well planned and included diversionary attacks against military installations in La Plata as well as local police stations. The combined response of the military services and police was almost immediate, and the end result was that the bulk of the poorly armed ERP forces was trapped. It is believed that Argentine army intelligence had advance notice that the attack would occur and thus laid a trap for the ERP.

3.3(b)(1)

[redacted] the authorities captured two ERP members who carried documents relating to the Domingo Viejobueno battalion several weeks before the attack. The chiefs of the operations and logistic sections of the ERP general command were captured in mid-December, and the logistics chief admitted under interrogation that the ERP was short of weapons. It was also reported that the Montoneros gave the ERP logistical assistance, but the exact role of the Montoneros in the operation has yet to be determined.

The meaning of this defeat for the ERP is not precisely clear. One fact that emerged from the battle was that most of the ERP casualties were between 17 and 24 years old, and 30 percent of them were women. This could mean that the ERP is scraping the bottom of the barrel for recruits or it could also mean that the attack was intended as a training mission. One thing that is clear is that the ERP, at least in Buenos Aires Province, is short of weapons. During the last part of December, Buenos Aires police uncovered an ERP small-arms firing range and captured a number of small arms plus ammunition. This loss may account for the desperation of the ERP attempt. The defeat at Monte Chingolo was a loss in prestige for the ERP. The large amount of casualties could have an adverse effect on the

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ERP recruitment program. The ERP will probably be forced back into smaller scale operations such as kidnapping and assassination against lower risk targets. It is also possible that the ERP may attempt to stage a spectacular act to restore its sagging prestige, and targets for such an operation could include foreign diplomats.

It is a different matter for the Argentine armed forces. Their success at Monte Chingolo may be a sign that they have been able to overcome bureaucratic inefficiency, poor organization and lack of cooperation and thus have finally found the winning combination. If the armed forces continue to demonstrate their new found efficiency in subsequent operations, particularly if they take an active offensive role in counter-terrorist operations, the terrorists in Argentina could be coming on hard times. 3.5(c)

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Montonero Leader Disappears

On 29 December Roberto Quieto, a leader of the Montoneros, was seized at a public beach in suburban Buenos Aires by a group of heavily armed men whose leader identified himself as a federal police officer. According to press reports, his wife said Quieto was suddenly surrounded by the men as he lay sunbathing. The men forced the other sunbathers to lie down with their hands behind their heads, and then led Quieto, who was clad only in bathing trunks, off to a car. As his captors drove away they fired shots in the air.

Quieto's lawyers have presented habeas corpus petitions to the authorities, asking that the police disclose where Quieto is being held. Both federal and provincial police deny they have Quieto in custody, and this raises the distinct possibility that Quieto may have been abducted by a right-wing death squad. Under the current state of emergency in Argentina, Quieto could be held for an indefinite period of time by the authorities without being formally charged. The Montoneros have issued a communique denouncing Quieto's disappearance, which would seemingly discredit the theory that he had been abducted by the Montoneros because of an internal dispute.

Quieto, a Marxist-Leninist lawyer, first became involved in terrorism in 1970 when he formed the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). The Montoneros and the FAR joined forces in October 1973. Quieto's followers are considered to be more Marxist than Peronist and are more violence-prone than other elements of the Montoneros. Quieto is believed to be one of the key organizers of Montonero terrorist activity.

Because of Quieto's importance to the Montonero cause, and because he has a large group of violence-prone followers, it is possible that the Montoneros may attempt to abduct a high Argentine official or a foreign diplomat to exchange for Quieto. The U.S. Embassy commented that most observers feel Quieto was abducted by right wingers and thus is probably already dead. This could still lead to a terrorist act, as the Montoneros might carry out an abduction, as they did in the Egan case, in order to clarify the status not only of Quieto, but of other terrorists who have been arrested during the last few weeks.

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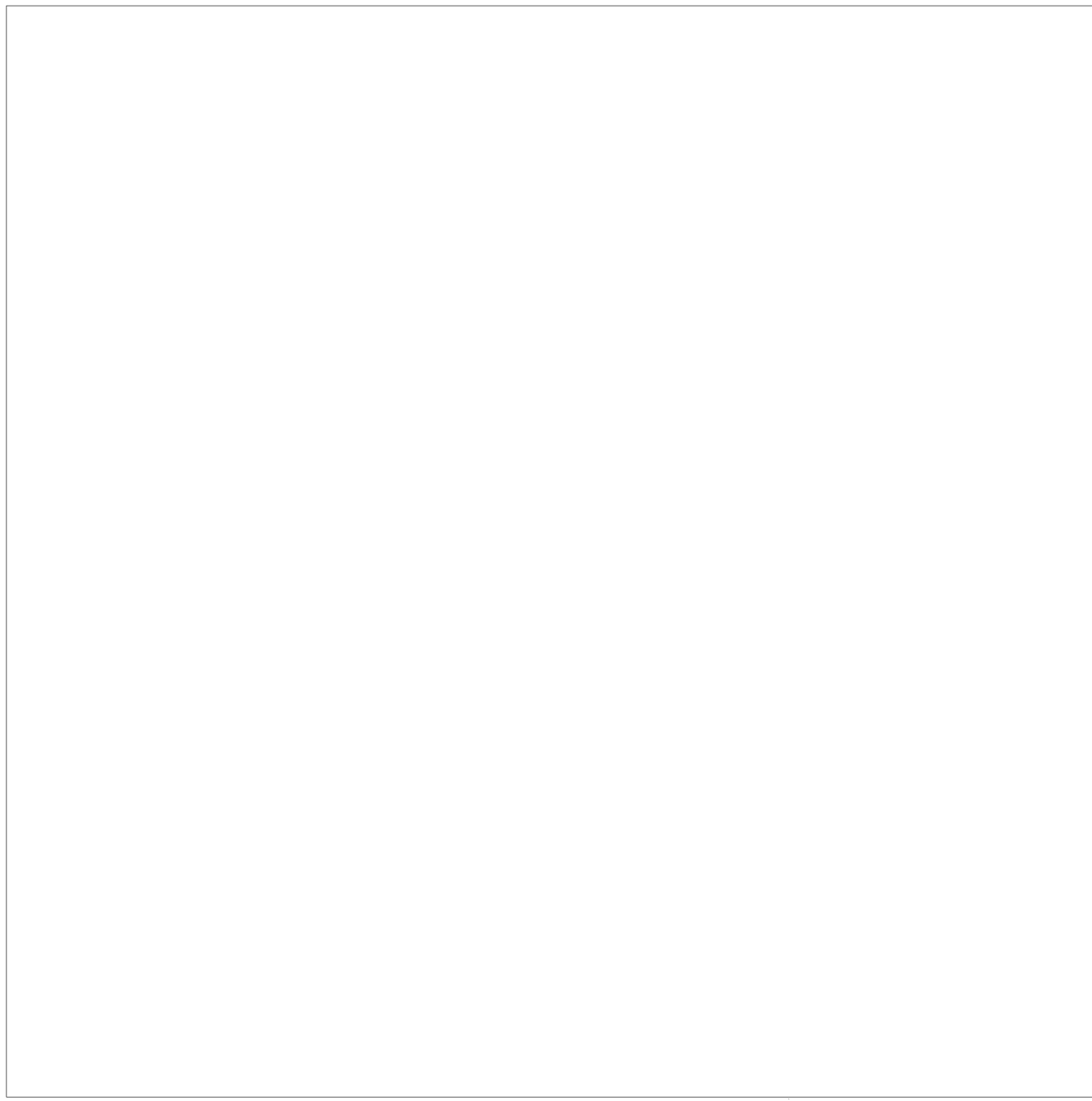

Mercedes Benz Executive Freed in Argentina

On 24 December Franz Metz, the production manager of the Mercedes Benz subsidiary in Argentina who was kidnapped on 24 October during a labor dispute, was set free by his Montonero

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captors for a large but undisclosed amount of ransom. After his release, Metz returned to West Germany. (The kidnapping was reported in the 28 October issue.) As part of the ransom, Mercedes Benz made labor concessions at the local subsidiary and also paid for advertisements in the world press which spelled out the Montonero position and which also said that Argentina was heading toward a civil war. The Montoneros' advertisement appeared in newspapers in Europe, Latin America and North America, including the 24 December issue of The Washington Post. ~~(UNCLASSIFIED)~~

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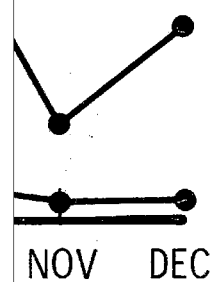

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Quieto Questioned by Argentine Authorities

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Montonero leader Roberto Quieto was indeed arrested by Argentine authorities on 28 December 1975. The Argentine government considers Quieto's capture to be highly sensitive and the matter has been tightly held in official circles. Quieto has cooperated with his captors and provided information which led to the identification and seizure of the Montoneros' largest and most important arms cache, which was located in a warehouse in suburban Buenos Aires. The arms cache included 150 Argentine submachine guns, five heavy machine guns, approximately 100 handguns, three million rounds of small arms ammunition, kits for cleaning and maintaining small arms, Montonero uniforms and field manuals providing instruction on small arms handling, explosives and guerrilla tactics.

Quieto also discussed the Montoneros in general. He stated that he is the Montonero political chief while Mario Firmenich, the Montonero commander, is the chief of the military apparatus and maintains his headquarters in Cordoba. Quieto claimed that the Montoneros have between seven thousand and ten thousand active members and about three hundred thousand supporters and that the organization maintains a Swiss bank account containing $150 million with an additional $50 million distributed throughout Argentina. (Comment: In 1974, the number of Montoneros was estimated at fifteen thousand with two thousand five hundred actual combatants. Considering that the Montoneros have been growing, the seven to ten thousand figure may be accurate. The three hundred thousand figure probably includes the element of the population that sympathizes with the Montoneros but is not actually involved with the organization. It is known that the Montoneros possess considerable amounts of money and are believed to have deposited some in Switzerland. There is no way of estimating, however, whether Quieto's figures are correct.)

Quieto further stated that as of the time of his capture, the Montoneros had no plans to kidnap or assassinate anyone. He said that the Montoneros principal effort is being directed toward political organization and is being aimed at the 1976 presidential elections. If their candidate loses, then the Montoneros will attempt to provoke a military coup which they believe will result in the polarization of the population, with

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the Peronists joining the Montoneros. Quieto said that the Montoneros have members and contacts throughout the government and the military and that these contacts furnish the organization with information.

Finally, Quieto stated that the ties between the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the Montoneros are minor and that the ERP is portraying a stronger relationship between the Montoneros and the ERP than is actually the case, in order to build the ERP's image, lure recruits from the Montoneros and to confuse the authorities. He also stated that the Montoneros are not involved in the Revolutionary Coordinating Junta (JCR). While there is no evidence of Montonero involvement in the ERP-backed JCR, Quieto may be generally down-playing the Montoneros' relationship with the ERP, believing that to strongly link the two would not only further incriminate him, but would also detract from the Montoneros image of itself as a nationalistic political entity.

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TAB C - Potential Terrorist Targets in the U.S. and Abroad

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Target: U.S. Personnel

Place: Argentina, Buenos Aires

Date: Current

** The U.S. official community in Buenos Aires believes that the Montoneros might try to kidnap someone of international importance in an effort to force the Argentine government to release Roberto Quieto, a prominent Montonero leader recently arrested. There is a report that the Montoneros are planning a major operation, probably against an Argentine military unit. They might decide, however, that they would gain more leverage by seizing a foreign diplomat.

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TAB C - Potential Terrorist Targets in the U.S. and Abroad

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NR [redacted]

Date: 15 January 1976

Place: Argentina, Cordoba

British Cultural Institute Bombed

The British Cultural Institute in Cordoba was bombed on 15 January. There was property damage but no one was injured. The blast was reportedly the work of nationalists protesting against Britain's refusal to recognize Argentine sovereignty over the Falkland Islands.

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Target:	U.S. Personnel	The U.S. official community in Buenos Aires believes that the Montoneros might try to kidnap someone of international importance in an effort to force the Argentine government to release Roberto Quieto, a prominent Montonero leader recently arrested. [redacted] 3.3(b)(1)
Place:	Argentina, Buenos Aires	
Date:	Current	

3.3(b)(1) [redacted] the Montoneros are planning a major operation, probably against an Argentine military unit. They might decide, however, that they would gain more leverage by seizing a foreign diplomat. [redacted]

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